



Substitute House Bill No. 7112

Public Act No. 17-190

AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN'S ADVOCACY CENTERS.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. Section 17a-106a of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2018*):

(a) For purposes of this section, "children's advocacy center" means an entity accredited or granted associate or developing status by the National Children's Alliance that provides a child-focused, trauma-informed, facility-based program that fosters collaboration among members of a multidisciplinary team established pursuant to subsection (b) of this section for the purpose of interviewing or meeting with children and children's parents, guardians or other caregivers, in order to obtain information and provide such information to personnel charged with making decisions regarding the investigation and prosecution of allegations of child abuse or neglect or trafficking, as defined in section 46a-170, of children and the safety, treatment and provision of services to alleged victims of child abuse or neglect or trafficking of children.

~~[(a)]~~ (b) The Commissioner of Children and Families, as department head of the lead agency, and the appropriate state's attorney may establish multidisciplinary teams for the ~~[purpose]~~ purposes of (1)

Substitute House Bill No. 7112

reviewing particular cases or particular types of cases, [or to coordinate the prevention, intervention and treatment] (2) coordinating the intervention in and prevention of child abuse or neglect or trafficking of children and the treatment of abused, neglected or trafficked children in each judicial district, [or to review] (3) reviewing selected cases of child abuse or neglect or [cases involving the trafficking, as defined in section 46a-170, of minor children. The purpose of such multidisciplinary teams is to advance and coordinate] trafficking of children, (4) advancing and coordinating the prompt investigation of suspected cases of child abuse or neglect [, to reduce] or trafficking of children, (5) reducing the trauma [of any child victim] experienced by alleged victims of such abuse or neglect or trafficking and, [to ensure] (6) ensuring the [protection and] treatment of [the child] abused, neglected or trafficked children and the protection of such children and their families. The head of the local law enforcement agency or [his or her] such head's designee may request the assistance of the Division of State Police within the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection [for] in order to accomplish such purposes.

[(b)] (c) Each multidisciplinary team shall consist of at least one representative of each of the following: (1) The state's attorney of the judicial district of the multidisciplinary team, or such state's attorney's designee; (2) the Commissioner of Children and Families, or the commissioner's designee; (3) the [head] heads of the local or state law enforcement agencies, or [his or her designee] such heads' designees; (4) a health care professional with substantial experience in the diagnosis and treatment of abused or neglected children, who shall be designated by the multidisciplinary team members; (5) a member, where appropriate, of a youth service bureau; (6) a mental health professional with substantial experience in the treatment of abused or neglected children, who shall be designated by the multidisciplinary team members; [and] (7) a forensic interviewer, who shall be

Substitute House Bill No. 7112

designated by the multidisciplinary team members; (8) a victim advocate, who shall be designated by the multidisciplinary team members; and (9) any other appropriate individual with expertise in the welfare of children that the members of the multidisciplinary team deem necessary. Each multidisciplinary team shall select a chairperson. [A] Each multidisciplinary team may invite experts to participate in the review of any case and may invite any other individual with particular information germane to the case to participate in such review, provided the expert or individual shall have the same [protection] protections and obligations under subsections [(f) and (g)] (h) to (j), inclusive, of this section as members of the multidisciplinary team.

~~[(c)]~~ (d) The Governor's task force for justice for abused children, through the subcommittee comprised of individuals with expertise in the investigation of child abuse and neglect, shall: (1) Establish and modify standards to be observed by multidisciplinary teams; (2) review protocols of the multidisciplinary teams; and (3) monitor and evaluate multidisciplinary teams and make recommendations for modifications to the system of multidisciplinary teams.

(e) Children's advocacy centers may assist multidisciplinary teams by (1) providing safe, child and family-friendly settings that maintain the privacy of children and their families; (2) establishing policies and procedures that are culturally competent; (3) aiding in the development of written protocols for an interdisciplinary and coordinated approach to such investigations; (4) providing forensic interviews of children that (A) are conducted by a trained forensic interviewer, (B) are recorded, (C) solicit information in an unbiased, fact-finding manner that is culturally sensitive and appropriate for each child's developmental stage, and (D) may be observed by members of the multidisciplinary teams involved in such investigations whenever possible; (5) providing specialized medical

Substitute House Bill No. 7112

evaluation and treatment, mental health services and support and advocacy services to children at such centers or through coordination with and referral to other appropriate providers of such services; (6) providing regular case review for the purpose of aiding in decision-making, problem solving, systems coordination and information sharing concerning the status of cases and the services required by children and their families; and (7) providing a tracking system for monitoring the progress and outcomes of cases.

(f) The state chapter of the National Children's Alliance and multidisciplinary teams may (1) coordinate and facilitate the exchange of information among children's advocacy centers; (2) provide technical assistance to municipalities in order to support the establishment, growth and accreditation of children's advocacy centers; (3) educate the public and the General Assembly on the needs of victims of child abuse or neglect or trafficking of children; (4) provide or coordinate multidisciplinary training opportunities that support a comprehensive response to allegations of child abuse or neglect or trafficking of children; and (5) submit a report annually to the Governor's task force on justice for abused children and the General Assembly concerning outcomes from each children's advocacy center.

[(d)] (g) All criminal investigative work of [the] multidisciplinary teams shall be undertaken by members of [the team] such multidisciplinary teams who are law enforcement officers and all child protection investigative work of [the] such multidisciplinary teams shall be undertaken by members of [the team] such multidisciplinary teams who represent the Department of Children and Families, provided such representatives [of the department] may coordinate [all] investigative work with such multidisciplinary teams and rely upon information generated by [the team] such multidisciplinary teams in the course of such department's investigations. The protocols,

Substitute House Bill No. 7112

procedures and standards of [the] such multidisciplinary teams shall not supersede the protocols, procedures and standards of the agencies who are [on the multidisciplinary team] represented by members of such multidisciplinary teams.

[(e)] (h) Each multidisciplinary team shall have access to and may copy any record, transcript, document, photograph or other data pertaining to an alleged child victim within the possession of the Department of Children and Families, any public or private medical facility or any public or private health professional provided, in the case of confidential information, the coordinator of the multidisciplinary team, or such coordinator's designee, [identifies] shall identify the record in writing and [certifies] certify, under oath, that the record sought is necessary to investigate child abuse or neglect and that the multidisciplinary team will maintain the record as confidential. No person who provides access to or copies of [such] a record upon delivery of certification under this section shall be liable to any third party for such action. [The] No multidisciplinary team shall [not] be deemed [to be] a public agency [under] as defined in section 1-200, for the purposes of the Freedom of Information Act.

[(f)] (i) No person shall disclose information obtained from a meeting of [the] a multidisciplinary team without the consent of the participant of the meeting who provided such information unless disclosure is ordered by a court of competent jurisdiction or is necessary to comply with the provisions of the Constitution of the state of Connecticut.

[(g)] (j) Each multidisciplinary team shall maintain records of meetings that include, but are not limited to, the name of the alleged victim and perpetrator, the names of the members of the multidisciplinary team and [their] such members' positions, the decision or recommendation of the multidisciplinary team and

Substitute House Bill No. 7112

information regarding support services provided. In any proceeding to gain access to such records or testimony concerning matters discussed at [a meeting] such meetings, the privileges from disclosure applicable to the information provided by each of the participants at [the] such meeting shall apply to all participants.

Approved July 10, 2017